

WEIS A 21.6

ICHI

Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues  
Commission Indépendante sur les Questions Humanitaires Internationales

WEIS  
COLLECTION

RSP DOCUMENTATION  
CENTRE

RSP DOCUMENTATION  
CENTRE

STATEMENT BY  
HASSAN BIN TALAL  
CROWN PRINCE OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM  
OF JORDAN

AT THE  
INAUGURAL CEREMONY

JULY 5, 1983

STATEMENT BY  
HASSAN BIN TALAL  
CROWN PRINCE OF THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM  
OF JORDAN  
AT THE  
INAUGURAL CEREMONY

MR. SECRETARY-GENERAL,

I WOULD LIKE FIRST OF ALL TO EXPRESS TO YOU ON BEHALF OF MY FELLOW COMMISSIONERS OUR APPRECIATION FOR YOUR KIND WORDS REGARDING THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ISSUES. YOUR OWN COMMITMENT TO HUMANITARIAN CAUSES AND THE PERSONAL INTEREST YOU HAVE SHOWN IN OUR UNDERTAKING ARE A SOURCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT TO US. WE WOULD WISH TO REMAIN IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH YOU AND WITH THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM IN A CONTEXT OF COMPLEMENTARITY AND MUTUAL SUPPORT.

CONTINUED/... 2

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, FELLOW COMMISSIONERS,

IT IS A MATTER OF DEEP PERSONAL SATISFACTION TO ME THAT WE SHOULD BE MEETING HERE TODAY TO INAUGURATE THE INDEPENDENT COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ISSUES. ITS ORIGIN IS TO BE FOUND IN A PROPOSAL I MADE TO THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY SUGGESTING THAT MEMBER STATES SHOULD ENDEAVOUR COLLECTIVELY TO PROMOTE A NEW INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORDER.

IN RECENT YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A LOT OF TALK ABOUT THE VARIOUS "ORDERS" AND IN SOME QUARTERS THE WORD "NEW" IS VIEWED WITH SUSPICION AND APPREHENSION. LET ME EMPHASIZE IN THIS CONNECTION THAT ADDING SOMETHING NEW DOES NOT MEAN DISCARDING EVERYTHING OLD. ON THE CONTRARY, IT IS OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE, ESPECIALLY IN THE HUMANITARIAN FIELD, THAT WHAT HAS BEEN PAINSTAKINGLY BUILT IS TENACIOUSLY PRESERVED. HOWEVER, NEW SITUATIONS CALL FOR NEW APPROACHES AND NEW PROBLEMS CANNOT ALWAYS BE RESOLVED THROUGH OLD SOLUTIONS.

MUCH TOO OFTEN, HUMANITARIAN PROBLEMS ARE VIEWED IN A POLITICAL CONTEXT AND HUMAN WELFARE IS SACRIFICED IN THE NAME OF MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT. WE IN THE COMMISSION PROPOSE TO PLEAD FOR "POLITICS WHERE PEOPLE MATTER" FOR NO PROGRESS IS TRUE PROGRESS IF IT DIMINISHES THE DIGNITY

AND WORTH OF HUMAN BEINGS. NO AFFLUENCE IS WORTHWHILE IF IT AFFECTS THE HAPPINESS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE ITS ULTIMATE BENEFICIARIES. DURING DISCUSSIONS OF NATIONAL INTERESTS, REGIONAL POLITICS OR GLOBAL STRATEGIES, WE SOMETIMES TEND TO FORGET THAT THE ULTIMATE LOSERS OR WINNERS OF THESE GRAND SCHEMES ARE, IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, HUMAN BEINGS - HORDES OF INNOCENT VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCES OVER WHICH THEY HAVE LITTLE OR NO CONTROL.

YOU WILL RECALL THAT THE SUGGESTION REGARDING A NEW INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORDER WAS MADE IN VERY GENERAL TERMS. DESPITE THIS, OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF IT, THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION RELATING TO THE ORDER WAS ADOPTED BY CONSENSUS. LAST DECEMBER THE ASSEMBLY ADOPTED, AGAIN BY CONSENSUS, A SECOND RESOLUTION WHICH IN ITS PREAMBULAR PARAGRAPHS MENTIONED THE PROPOSAL RELATING TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT COMMISSION.

I HAVE MENTIONED THE UNITED NATIONS RESOLUTIONS BY WAY OF BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND NOT BECAUSE I WISH TO ATTACH TO THEM MORE IMPORTANCE THAN THEY DESERVE. IN FACT IF I MAY BE FORGIVEN FOR SAYING SO, U.N. RESOLUTIONS ARE UNFORTUNATELY SELDOM LANDMARKS OF HISTORY, THEY ARE MORE OFTEN MERE 'FOOTPRINTS IN THE SANDS OF TIME'.

I COME FROM A REGION WHICH HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF HUNDREDS OF RESOLUTIONS. WE HAVE THEREFORE REACHED A STAGE WHERE WE CAN VIEW THEM WITH A DEGREE OF DETACHMENT. THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RESOLUTIONS BY GOVERNMENTS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THEIR ADOPTION. THE MIDDLE EAST HAS BEEN THE THEATRE OF TURMOIL AND BLOODSHED SINCE DECADES. WE ARE STILL TODAY WITNESSING THE UNRESOLVED TRAGEDY AND CONTINUOUS SUFFERING OF HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE OF MY REGION. BUT AS PROVIDENCE GAVE US THE TROUBLES WE HAVE, IT ALSO GAVE US PERSEVERENCE AND COURAGE TO FACE THEM. NONETHELESS, IN MY COUNTRY, SITTING IN THE EYE OF THE STORM, I HAVE ASKED MYSELF YEAR AFTER YEAR: ARE WE DOING EVERYTHING WE CAN SO THAT THE FATE OF OUR CHILDREN MAY BE BETTER THAN OUR OWN? I HOPE OUR COMMISSION WILL HELP ME FIND THE ANSWER.

SOME TIME AGO WE HAD AN ICRC CONFERENCE IN AMMAN. ON THAT OCCASION, A FEW OF US THOUGHT THAT EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO DEVELOP A UNIVERSAL CODE OF CONDUCT. OTHERS FELT THAT GOVERNMENTS WOULD BAULK AT THE IDEA AND THAT AT BEST SOME GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ETHICS COULD BE ELABORATED IN ORDER TO PREVENT OR ALLEVIATE HUMAN SUFFERING IN TIMES OF WAR AND PEACE. DISCUSSIONS AT THAT TIME HELPED ME CRYSTALIZE MY OWN THINKING REGARDING THE DIRE NEED TO PROMOTE

A COMPREHENSIVE HUMANITARIAN FRAMEWORK WHICH COVERS MORE ADEQUATELY THE EXISTING GAPS IN INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW AND PRACTICE AND DEALS WITH ISSUES WHICH ARE NOT SUFFICIENTLY ADDRESSED. THIS MAY BE A CHALLENGING AND POSSIBLY QUITE FRUSTRATING TASK BUT IT NEEDS TO BE UNDERTAKEN. THE WORK OF OUR COMMISSION MAY HOPEFULLY BE THE BEGINNING OF SUCH AN UNDERTAKING BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY.

THE GREATEST ADVANTAGE OF THE COMMISSION LIES IN ITS INDEPENDENCE. ITS DELIBERATIONS NEED NOT SUFFER FROM CONSTRAINTS WHICH USUALLY CHARACTERIZE DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS. ALTHOUGH MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMISSION IS NOT YET COMPLETE, IT IS ALREADY CLEAR THAT THE MEMBERS REPRESENT EVERY PART OF THE WORLD AND WITHIN THE GROUP THERE IS A WIDE RANGE OF SKILL AND EXPERIENCE AVAILABLE FOR CONSIDERING HUMANITARIAN ISSUES. WE HOPE TO KEEP THE MEMBERSHIP SMALL BUT EQUITABLY DIVIDED BETWEEN THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

THE COMMISSION COUNTS AMONG ITS MEMBERS THOSE WHO STILL BEAR THE BURDEN OF HIGH PUBLIC OFFICE, AS WELL AS THOSE WHO HAVING DONE SO ARE NOW ABLE TO OFFER A WEALTH OF WISDOM BASED ON LONG EXPERIENCE. COMING FROM DIFFERENT CONTINENTS AND DIFFERENT EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUNDS, WE ARE BOUND TOGETHER BY OUR COMMON HUMANI-

TARIAN CONCERN WITH THE WELFARE OF HUMAN BEINGS IN THE EXERCISE OF THEIR FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS. IT IS OUR HOPE THAT THE INTERACTIONS OF SUCH A GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WILL YIELD RESULTS WHICH WOULD TRANSCEND DIFFERENCES IN THE SUBJECTIVITIES AND PRACTICES OF PEOPLES, NOT MERELY ACROSS NATIONAL BOUNDARIES, BUT ALSO ACROSS CULTURES, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL VALUES.

WE ARE AWARE THAT CYNICS MAY SHRUG THEIR SHOULDERS AND SAY: HERE IS YET ANOTHER COMMISSION: THERE WILL BE YET ANOTHER REPORT. THERE ARE ALSO THE DEFEATISTS WHO FIND IT EASIER TO CRITICIZE THAN TO PUT FORWARD CONSTRUCTIVE SUGGESTIONS. THEY ARE SO ACCUSTOMED TO FAILURE THAT FOR THEM NOTHING NEW CAN SUCCEED AND THEREFORE NOTHING NEW SHOULD BE ATTEMPTED UNLESS THERE IS TOTAL GUARANTEE BEFOREHAND OF GREAT POPULAR SUCCESS. SUCH ATTITUDES ARE THE REAL IMPEDIMENTS TO PROGRESS. WE ARE, OF COURSE, CONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT CONCRETE RESULTS AND TANGIBLE ACTIONS ARE MORE IMPORTANT THAN SPEECHES AND REPORTS. HOWEVER, ACTION WHICH IS NOT PRECEDED BY CAREFUL THOUGHT CAN BE MORE DANGEROUS THAN NO ACTION AT ALL. NATURALLY, IT CAN BE ARGUED THAT THERE IS NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN. AND I AM SURE MY FELLOW COMMISSIONERS WILL AGREE WITH ME WHEN I SAY THAT OUR PURPOSE IS NOT "TO REINVENT THE WHEEL". WE DO NOT BELIEVE IN THE PROLIFERATION OF INTERNATIONAL BODIES. WE SEE THE TASK OF OUR COMMISSION LIMITED IN TIME AND SCOPE. IT MUST ADDRESS SPECIFIC, PRE-DETERMINED AREAS OF HUMANITARIAN CONCERN WHICH CALL FOR GREATER ATTENTION AND CARE.

WE RECOGNIZE THE VALUE OF THE EFFORTS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN AGENCIES, BOTH GOVERNMENTAL AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL. MANY OF THESE ARE REPRESENTED HERE TODAY AND ON BEHALF OF THE COMMISSION, I WISH TO EXPRESS TO THEM OUR ADMIRATION AND GRATITUDE. I HAVE MYSELF HAD OCCASION TO STUDY CLOSELY THE WORK OF THE UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES DEALING WITH REFUGEES, WITH CHILDREN, WITH VICTIMS OF NATURAL DISASTERS AND SO ON. I BELIEVE THAT THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO ALLEVIATION OF HUMAN SUFFERING IS INVALUABLE.

I HAVE ALSO WITNESSED THE WORK OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS SUCH AS THE INTERNATIONAL RED CROSS AS WELL AS PHILANTHROPIC BODIES AND VOLUNTARY AGENCIES. I WISH TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE SELFLESS SERVICE THEY RENDER TO MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE GLOBE.

THE FACT IS NONETHELESS THAT DESPITE ALL THESE NOBLE EFFORTS, THE PROBLEMS THESE AGENCIES FACE REMAIN UNDIMINISHED. WHEN THE PROPOSAL FOR A NEW INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN ORDER WAS MADE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY, IT WAS STATED THAT, IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY, "THE SIDE EFFECTS OF EXCESSIVE PREOCCUPATION WITH MATERIAL ASPECTS OF HUMAN LIFE ARE NOW BECOMING DANGEROUSLY EVIDENT IN THE HUMANITARIAN FIELD WHICH HAS REMAINED RELATIVELY NEGLECTED. THE QUALITY OF LIFE HAS STEADILY DEGENERATED OVER THE PAST DECADES. HUMAN RIGHTS HAVE, BY AND LARGE, REMAINED A PERIPHERAL ISSUE. PROBLEMS OF POVERTY, HUNGER, ILLITERACY, UPROOTEDNESS HAVE NOT RECEIVED AS MUCH ATTENTION AS THEY



DESERVE. THE INDIVIDUAL HUMAN BEING, THE ULTIMATE RECIPIENT OF ALL PROGRESS, HAS SEEN VERY LITTLE COME HIS WAY IN MOST PARTS OF THE WORLD. WHETHER ONE LOOKS AT THE GLOBE IN THE EAST-WEST CONTEXT OR THE NORTH-SOUTH CONTEXT, THE OVERALL PICTURE REMAINS GRIM: WE ARE NOT ADEQUATELY PREPARED FOR THE NEXT CENTURY OR EVEN THE NEXT DECADE." IN ORDER TO PREPARE BETTER FOR THE 21ST CENTURY, WE NEED TO GALVANIZE THE YOUTH. WE WILL APPEAL TO THE SENSITIVITY AND CONSCIENCE OF THE YOUNG AND SEEK THEIR SUPPORT IN OUR ENDEAVOURS. THERE IS NO BETTER INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE OF MANKIND THAN WORKING WITH AND FOR THE YOUNG.

IT IS ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE TODAY MORE THAN THIRTY MILLION PERSONS WHO ARE OUTSIDE THEIR HOMELANDS EITHER BECAUSE THEY HAD TO FLEE AS REFUGEES OR BECAUSE ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES OBLIGED THEM TO ABANDON THEIR HOMES AND HEARTHES IN SEARCH OF A BETTER LIFE. THERE ARE UNTOLD MILLIONS OF OTHERS WHO ARE DISPLACED WITHIN THEIR COUNTRIES DUE TO DIRE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH ARE NOT OF THEIR MAKING. THE STORY OF THE UPROOTED IS BUT ONE EXAMPLE AMONG MANY OF THE ILLS OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY. IT IS, HOWEVER, A PERTINENT EXAMPLE OF THE POVERTY OF SOLUTIONS AS COMPARED TO THE ENORMITY OF PROBLEMS. OF COURSE, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY PROVIDES RELIEF IN CASES OF NATURAL AND MAN-MADE DISASTERS.

BUT THERE IS INCREASING AWARENESS THAT RELIEF IN ITSELF IS NOT A SOLUTION. A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS HAVE CONSEQUENTLY ARISEN IN RELATION TO DISASTERS:HOW TO PREVENT RATHER THAN CURE? IF PREVENTION IS NOT FEASIBLE, HOW TO HELP SPEEDILY AND AFFECTIVELY SO THAT THE SUFFERING OF THE VICTIMS IS NOT UNDULY PROLONGED? HOW TO DEVELOP SATISFACTORY EARLY WARNING SYSTEMS? HOW TO ENSURE ADEQUATE PREPAREDNESS? HOW TO PROMOTE FURTHER INTERNATIONAL LEGISLATION WHERE GAPS EXIST? ABOVE ALL, HOW TO ENSURE FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING LEGISLATION? ETC. ETC. THE LIST OF SUCH QUESTIONS IS LONG AS COMPARED TO AVAILABLE ANSWERS. IT IS MY SINCERE HOPE THAT THE COMMISSION WOULD HELP IN THE SEARCH FOR ANSWERS. I ALSO HOPE THAT WE WILL HAVE A PRACTICAL, DOWN TO EARTH APPROACH. PROCEEDING IN A REALISTIC MANNER TO DEAL WITH HUMANITARIAN ISSUES ONE BY ONE, WE MAY BE ABLE NOT ONLY TO INCREASE THE INTERNATIONAL AWARENESS OF THESE ISSUES BUT ALSO FACILITATE DEBATE, AT NATIONAL, REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL. BEYOND THE REALM OF PURELY HUMANITARIAN ISSUES, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT IT IS NOT ADEQUATELY REALIZED THAT IN TODAY'S SHRUNKEN WORLD, ADVERSITY ANYWHERE CAN BE A THREAT TO PROSPERITY EVERYWHERE JUST AS INSECURITY ANYWHERE CONSTITUTES A POTENTIAL DANGER TO SECURITY EVERYWHERE. A CLOSE LOOK AT THE

CONTINUED/... 10

CONTINUING ARMS RACE AND THE CONFRONTATIONAL POSTURES BETWEEN THE EAST AND THE WEST INDICATES THAT, UNWITTINGLY, THE WORLD MAY BE ENTERING INTO COLD WAR II. I HOPE IT IS NOT SO. I DO THINK, HOWEVER, THAT ALL MEN OF GOODWILL SHOULD DO WHATEVER THEY CAN SO THAT THERE IS NO COLD WAR II. SIMILARLY, IT SHOULD BE UNDERSTOOD THAT DETENTE IN THE NORTH CANNOT BE EXCLUSIVE AND INDIVISIBLE; IT MUST APPLY EVERYWHERE.

WITHOUT WISHING TO BE RHETORICAL OR MORALISTIC, LET ME SAY THAT IN THIS VILLAGE, OUR PLANET, WE HAVE TO LEARN TO LIVE TOGETHER AND TO RESPECT INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE HUMAN RIGHTS. EVEN THOUGH OUR COMMISSION WILL BE DEALING WITH HUMANITARIAN ISSUES RATHER THAN HUMAN RIGHTS, THE LINKAGE BETWEEN THE TWO IS INEVITABLE.

WE FULLY REALIZE THAT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE COMMISSION MAY NOT IN ITSELF BE A MIRACULOUS PANACEA. HOWEVER, EVEN IF IT REPRESENTS NOTHING MORE THAN A "CRY OF ANGUISH" BY A DEEPLY CONCERNED GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS, IT IS WORTHWHILE FOR IT MAY INCREASE THE AWARENESS OF THE GRAVE PROBLEMS OUR CHILDREN ARE GOING TO INHERIT. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, THE QUESTION TO WHICH THE COMMISSION MAY HAVE TO SEEK AN ANSWER IS THIS: IN THE CONTEMPORARY ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT, IS IT POSSIBLE FOR HUMAN BEINGS TO BE MORE HUMANE?